

NORTHERN YORK COUNTY HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION

Society

March 2026 Newsletter

"Liberty is the breath of life to nations." ~ George Bernard Shaw ~

250 years ago...

One of the most notable events was the British evacuation of Boston on March 17, 1776, after General George Washington's Continental Army fortified Dorchester Heights with artillery obtained from Fort Ticonderoga. This pushed the British forces, under General William Howe, to withdraw from the city, marking a significant early victory for the Patriots.

Of note:

- **March 14, 1776:** Alexander Hamilton receives his commission as captain of a New York artillery company. Throughout the rest of 1776, Captain Hamilton established himself as a great military leader as he directed his artillery company in several battles in and around New York City.
- **March 31, 1776:** Abigail Adams writes to her husband, John Adams, urging him and the other members of the Continental Congress not to forget about the nation's women when fighting for America's independence from Great Britain. Abigail's words...

"I long to hear that you have declared an independency. And, by the way, in the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation."

**Discover more about the promise of 1776 for women
from the American Revolution Museum.**

250 AMERICA PA

1st
FRIDAY

March Events

First Friday at Dills Tavern

March 6th: 7pm-10pm

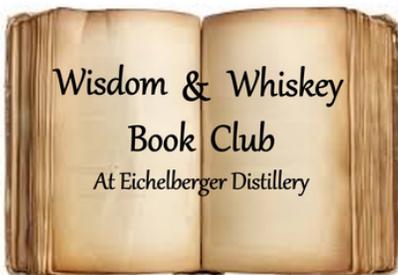
Theme: St Patrick's Day!

From the Burren to the Highlands to Appalachia, Across the Pond finds the best songs and tunes, then adds their own unique arrangements. If you love Celtic music, (and who doesn't?) you'll want to come early to secure a seat in the ballroom. In honor of St Patrick's Day, wear something (or everything) green!



Join Murray and Stephanie in celebrating Women's History month with a special tasting program focusing on spirits influenced by women. We will highlight Widow Jane, Catherine Carpenter's sour mash, Mary Dowling (The Mother of Bourbon), beautiful Kate Kearney, and her Irish Mountain Dew and last but not least Martha Washington and her famous Cherry Bounce. Get your tickets before they sell out! Cheers!

[Advance tickets for Tasting Program found here!](#)



Wisdom & Whiskey Book Club

Wednesday, March 11th

6:30-8 pm at the Eichelberger Distillery

Rosen explores the clashing visions of Hamilton and Jefferson over how to balance liberty and power in a debate that continues to define—and divide—our country today.

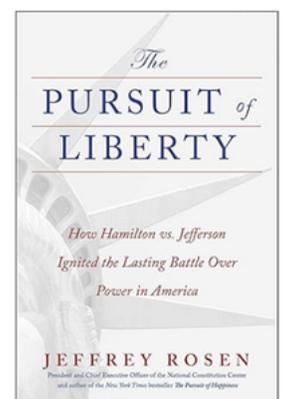
Our discussion schedule is as follows:

March 11th : Chapters 5 & 6

April 8th : Chapters 7 & 8

May 13th : Chapters 9 & 10 / Conclusion

This event is free and open to the public. You are welcome to bring a snack to share and we will have beverages.



March Events



Hymn Sing

Sunday; March 15th, 2:00 - 3:00pm

at Historic Monaghan Church

15 E. Church St, Dillsburg

Have you ever wondered what church was like in colonial America?

Come experience a Colonial church service and learn why England was singing the new hymns written by men such as Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley, while colonial America was resistant to the change. Join us as we explain meters and the key event that introduced the new hymns into the churches of America.



Speaker Series: Dominish Miller

“A Woman's Daily Life in Colonial America.”

Thursday; March 19th, 6:30-8 pm

at Maple Shade Barn

In honor of Women's History Month, Dominish Miller will speak about a woman's daily life in colonial America - their hard work yet with limited legal and political rights. This presentation will last 1.5 hours.

Maple Shade Barn: 35 Greenbriar Lane,
Dillsburg, PA 17019

[Read more about
Dominish here!](#)



Women & Whiskey

Wednesday; March 25th, 6:00-8 pm

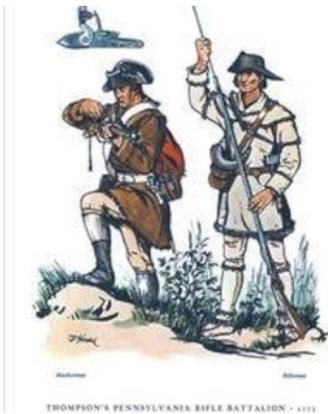
at the Eichelberger Distillery



Ladies, it's time again to gather your girlfriends and spend an evening learning about spirits influenced by women from the 18th and 19th centuries. In addition to sampling a variety of spirits, we will make the spotlight drink together and enjoy some delicious snacks. Reserve your tickets right away as these events sell out quickly! [Tickets may be purchased here!](#)

The York Rifle Company & Battle of Long Island

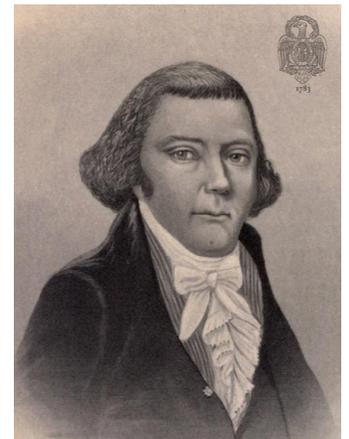
In June of 1776, George Washington correctly predicted that New York City would be the next strategic focus of the British Army. Control of New York City by the British would enable control of the Hudson river, which would split the Colonies in two. The British arrived in July of 1776 on a fleet of ships with approximately 32,000 troops while Washington's Army contained approximately 19,000 men at this point in time. The stage was set for a confrontation between the two armies.



The **York County Rifle Company**, as part of Colonel Thompson's Rifle Brigade, was with Washington's Army in New York. In October of 1775, during the time period between the siege of Boston, the Battle of Bunker Hill and the Company's arrival in New York, their Captain, Michael Doudel, resigned. While the exact reasons are unclear, both poor health and financial difficulties have been cited. However, rumors of cowardice also circulated and several of his soldiers cited his cowardice in their subsequent pension applications.

In addition, during Doudel's command, his men, many of whom were new and untrained soldiers, were disorganized and undisciplined. With his resignation, Henry Miller, a first lieutenant in his Company, was promoted to Captain.

Judging by the results of the unit moving forward, Captain Miller's leadership, along with his Company's additional military experience, improved the effectiveness of the York County Rifle Company. The men from York County had arrived on the scene in Boston with Pennsylvania long rifles that were capable of being accurate up to 300 yards.



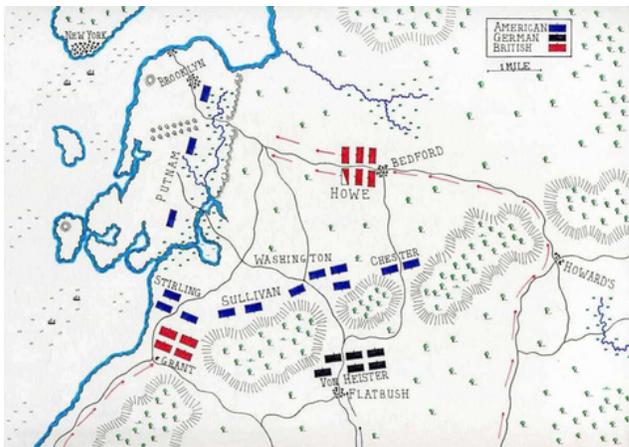
Henry Miller

In comparison, the most common firearm of the time was a musket which was only slightly accurate up to 50-80 yards. However, the Pennsylvania long rifle took much longer to reload and required frequent cleaning because the projectile fit so tightly in the barrel. It also lacked a bayonet. This made it a less effective weapon in traditional formations. As a result, the men from York County Company were most successful in Boston, and later in Long Island, at taking positions as snipers and aiming at British soldiers at distances from which the British could not return fire.

NYCHAPS Revolutionary War Project

The York Rifle Company & Battle of Long Island

It was in March of 1776 that Washington sent Captain Miller's company, now part of the First Continental Regiment under Colonel Hand, to New York City. They were able to travel the distance from Boston to New York in just under two weeks. But on July 1, 1776, the first term of enlistment ended for the original members of Captain Miller's company. Washington wrote of the men from York County that "the loss of this valuable and brave body of men will be an injury to the service. . . . They are, indeed, a very useful corps . . ." It's been estimated that about one-third of the original York Company re-enlisted in 1776.



Nonetheless, at Long Island, Washington had enough confidence in the unit to place them directly between the main body of the Continental Army and the point where the British attack was expected. Ultimately, the British landed on August 22, 1776 and Washington's Army was forced to retreat from Long Island with the First Regiment covering the retreat.

Captain Miller was the last man to board the boats as they left Long Island. He became so overwhelmed with the success of the stealthy retreat, he stood up in the boat and gave three loud cheers. This caused the British troops to fire volleys of shots through the thick fog. Fortunately, no one was hit, although the boats were nearly swamped.

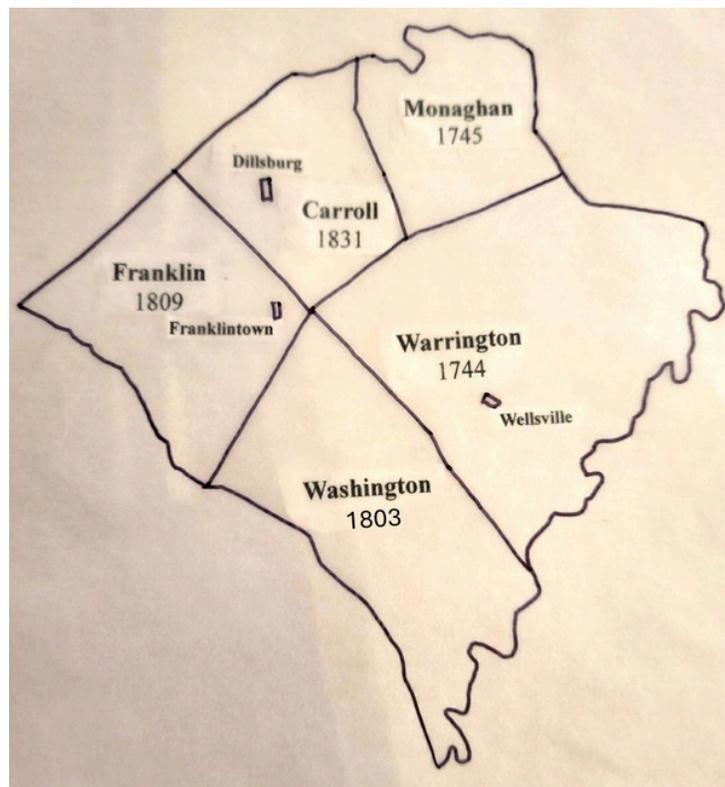


Henry Miller's men continued to serve with the Continental Army in battles as they retreated through New Jersey and, by the end of 1776, were again in Pennsylvania.

NYCHAPS Revolutionary War Project

The York Rifle Company & Battle of Long Island

What was the local involvement in this Battle? During this time period, there were 2 townships in northern York County. Washington would be created from Warrington in 1803. Carroll was formed from Monaghan in 1831 and Franklin from Monaghan in 1809. Because of limited documentation and retention of records it is difficult to determine facts with 100% accuracy. That said, NYCHAPS volunteers compared the muster roll for the York County Rifle Company to the tax lists of Warrington and Monaghan townships in an attempt to identify local men who were members of this unit. They are listed below along with the Township(s) in which they owned land.



Warrington

Thomas Armor
William Cooper

Monaghan

John Clark
John Dill
George Dougherty

Monaghan & Warrington

John Bell
John Jones
James Smith
John Taylor

Thomas Campbell (much more information on him to come)

Henry Miller (unclear if this is Captain Henry Miller)

The Impractical Distillers: Vol 2.3

What's Your Proof?

The practice of distilling is part science, part art. Recently a visitor to the distillery enthusiastically shared his personal interest in one of the most useful scientific measurement tools used in distilling – the hydrometer or alcoholometer. A few days later he returned with “part” of his extensive collection of instruments used to determine the “proof” or percentage of alcohol in various spirits.

If you recall high school physics class, you may remember Archimedes’ principle; a buoyant force pushing up on an object immersed in a fluid is equal to the weight of the fluid that is displaced. This talented 3rd century BC Greek scientist had many mathematical achievements, but his pragmatic concept led to the ability to determine the percentage of alcohol in a sample. Galileo and later Robert Boyle advanced the theory. Boyle coined the name “hydrometer” for the tool that emerged from the research.

In the late 1780’s Johann Georg Tralles recognized that density of water differs from other liquids and developed scales to measure this concept. The alcoholometer is a specific scale used to determine the concentration of alcohol where no sugar or other dissolved substances are present. Bartholomew Sikes and John Dicus developed scientific instruments in London. Sike’s instrument was adopted by the British excise authorities while the Dicas version was adopted by the American government in 1790.

The alcoholometer is relatively simple to use. At the Eichelberger Distillery we use ours daily. From measuring low wines from the stripping still, separating heads, hearts, and tails from the spirits still, diluting for barrel entry and finally determining final proof before bottling, we float the alcoholometer in a cylinder filled with spirit. Here are some examples of vintage and modern instruments:



Sikes alcoholometer (early 19th century)



Greibel Instrument Company,
Carbondale, PA (early 20th century),



Brady Instruments (current use)

The Impractical Distillers cont.



Alcoholometers are calibrated to meet Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) standards. The more modern glass floating scales are marked from 0 to 200. Halfway between is a “P” indicating proof or 100 proof. Temperature is important because volume of the liquid changes with the temperature. Each set has a thermometer. The Sikes thermometer is attached to an ivory scale, The Greibel thermometer is contained in the cylinder and the Brady is standard thermometer. The percentage alcohol determined at 60 degrees F is called True Proof. If the measurement is taken at temperatures other than 60F it must be converted by the use of tables or charts as depicted by the Sikes Hydrometer Manual.

Early Pennsylvania distillers estimated proof. The term goes back to the 16th century England. The British loved to tax things and spirits were taxed depending on alcohol content. A “burn-no-burn” test was utilized to determine a liquid that would ignite above proof and would not ignite under proof. Gunpowder soaked in spirit at 100 proof and above will ignite but will not burn at under 100 proof. By the end of the 17th century measurements based on specific gravity were introduced. By 1848 the US measured proof based on percentage alcohol and reported as alcohol by volume or abv. Simply, 100 proof is 50% alcohol.

The distillers at the “Eichelberger distillery” of the past certainly were aware of proof as they were charged \$1.25 for measuring proof or gauging a delivery of barrels to Baltimore in 1825.

The numbers on the scales are small, and eyes of the Impractical Distillers are old. But we do our best to get accurate readings at various points in the process of turning fruits and grains into spirits at the Eichelberger Distillery at Dills Tavern. Stop in to experience the process, observe the tools and techniques as you try your hand ... or eye at using the instruments. There's your proof!

The Impractical Distillers: *Sam and Murray*



Community Interests

NYCHAPS Best Kept Secret...



It has always been our pleasure to offer tours to local groups who contacted us, but we never made it a point to let our wider community know that they can schedule a tour for their bunch. Now all of that has changed. We spent 2025 testing and refining our group tours and are now offering them to bus companies, retirement homes, 55+ communities, clubs, family gatherings and anywhere there is a group of 10 or more interested people.

We offer two types of tours: single tours of **EITHER** the Tavern or the Distillery and combination tours of **BOTH** the Tavern and the Distillery. Regardless of which type of tour you choose, lunch can be included for an additional fee.

We've already hosted groups as varied as the Mid Atlantic Women's Motorcycle Rally to Messiah Lifeways. Of course, the "shoulder" months in spring and fall are prime time, and we have limited availability given that we also offer school field trips, public tours, events, History Camp, and more. So while this spring is already pretty well booked, you can still schedule for summer or fall.

If you are a part of a group (**10 or more people all paying with one check**) and would like to take a group tour of the Dills Tavern and/or the Eichelberger Distillery go to the [Group Tour page here](#) on our website for all the details.

And if you have a love of sharing history with others, being a docent might be a good way to scratch that itch. To find out if it's a good fit, go to the [Volunteer page found here](#) on our website under the Support tab and we'll reach out.



Community Interests

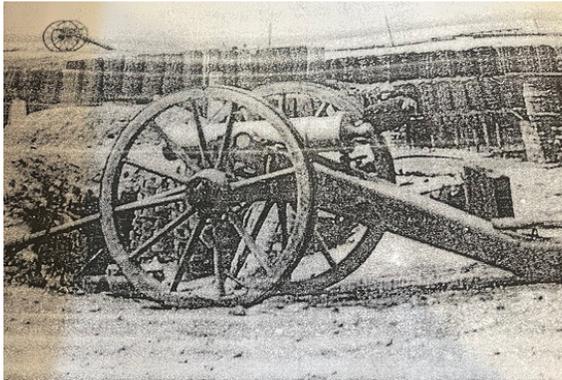
NYCHAPS History Camp Registration Enrollment Open to All!

Planning for this year's camp is already in the works and promises to be an exciting one in celebration of America's 250th!

Camp is the week of July 13-17 from 9:00am to noon at Dills Tavern.

[Enrollment information may be found here!](#)

Please contact: knellis@northernnyorkhistorical.org
if you have any questions.



Wagon Wheels Are Needed!

NYCHAPS has purchased a reproduction 12 pounder mountain howitzer (cannon). We only have the metal tube and we have to build a proper wood carriage for it. We hope to use it in our America 250th Anniversary events.

We need two wooden wagon wheels for the carriage. We are asking if someone might have two wagon wheels in good condition they could donate to this project. The wheels need to be in good shape, no rot or splits. They should be 38" high with iron rims at least 2" wide. Please contact us if you might be able to help us with this effort.

Thanks, Sam McKinney 717- 576- 5664



NORTHERN YORK COUNTY
**HISTORICAL &
PRESERVATION**
Society

www.northernnyorkhistorical.org
admin@northernnyorkhistorical.org
Maple Shade Barn Office 717-502-1440
35 Greenbriar Lane Dillsburg, PA 17019
Office Hours: Tues-Fri 11am - 3pm